



UNITED NATIONS  
*Office on Drugs and Crime*

**“The Need for European Assistance to Colombia for the Fight against Illicit Drugs”  
U.S. Congress  
Committee on the Judiciary’s Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland  
Security  
Committee on International Relations’ Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere**

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The world’s appetite for cocaine remains stable but uneven, declining in the United States while increasing in Europe. In 2005 more than two thirds of the supply came from Colombia (640 tons), where coca cultivation increased by 8% over 2004: a discouraging outcome taking into account the resolute efforts of the Colombian Government to eradicate this illicit cultivation.

However, this increase should be kept in perspective. The overall level of coca cultivation in Colombia remains almost 50% below the peak recorded in 2000. Furthermore, country-wide aerial eradication has become more difficult due to a growingly aggressive insurgency fuelled by the narco-economy (and vice versa).

The two major armed groups are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), on the extreme political left, and the United Self-Defence of Colombia (AUC), also called the ‘paramilitaries’ on the extreme right. The armed groups monopolize the purchase and sale of cocaine base and poppy latex and determine the taxes it charges to the traffickers, to the laboratories, the landing strips and the “gramaje”. They also guarantee territorial control for the production. The armed groups promote illicit cultivation in their areas of influence because the income from drug trafficking provides the hard currency required in the international arms market. Therefore, the two illegal adversaries, the guerillas and the paramilitary, engage in a continuous and fierce fight to secure their income and finance their operations. According to a National Planning Department study, the FARC obtains 60% of its income from drug trafficking and the AUC has recognized that most of their financing depends on drug trafficking. Reportedly, for each dollar of cocaine sold in any of the streets in the world, 10 to 15 cents end up in the hands of Colombia’s armed groups to continue financing the war.

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<sup>1</sup> This briefing is based on UNODC Report. Colombia. Coca cultivation survey. June 2006. (Adapted and updated).

The perverse vicious circle of drug trafficking-illegal crops-violence has resulted in a heavy burden on social and economic development. During the past ten years the country's financial resources were squeezed to provide greater resources to combat the narcoterrorism nexus and the resulting problems such as human rights violations, corruption, political instability and environmental destruction, in detriment of social and productive investment.

On the other hand, the UNODC study about productivity of coca fields and processing of coca base, suggest that there is more cocaine on the international market than previously believed. This may help explain why the price for cocaine has not gone up and the purity of doses has not decline on the streets of consuming nations, despite the halving in cultivation since 2000, the massive number of labs destroyed (1.953 in Colombia alone in 2005), and the dramatic (and still under-appreciated) increase in seizures world wide.

Clearly, the 2005 increase of the area under cultivation (6.000 ha) despite large-scale aerial eradication (139.000 ha) is a warning signal to the Colombian government and to those, that have participated in the joint drug control efforts.

This signal should alert us to refine drug control policies in Colombia in order to take into account the more challenging security environment, and the inevitable difficulty of destroying coca fields fragmented in size, dispersed on steep mountain slopes, embedded in protected national parks, and grown in proximity to international borders.

The overriding strategy of putting an end to coca cultivation through eradication must be pursued relentlessly. However, there should be a change in tactics using finer and more sustainable instruments. In particular, the second strong popular mandate received by President Uribe should make it possible for his new government to launch a major drive in favour of greater assistance to farmers in coca cultivation areas, accompanied by structural policies devised to redistribute land (especially land seized from drug lords) to internally displaced people. In Colombia, like in other countries, poverty in the countryside and lack of government control in many areas enable large-scale illicit activities and the resulting violence.

While aerial spraying is cost-effective and keeps pressure on insurgents and organized crime, coca farmers need to be convinced to eradicate their own fields. Voluntary eradication backed up by strong economic incentives would give farmers a grater sense of ownership in the government's zero-coca policies, and increase the chance of long-term success.

Countries that have shown the best results in the fight against illicit cultivations have found that alternative development is the most effective and sustainable eradication strategy. Indeed, a good alternative development strategy guarantees that the producer himself will destroy the illegal crops and will replace them with legal ones. Moreover, when this new activity is tied to a sustainable and profitable economy, the producer will not revert to growing illicit crops in a new location. Providing farmers legal and profitable alternatives and improving the living conditions in rural areas, villages and urban centers in regions affected by illicit cultivation proved to be the most effective socio-economic

interventions, in order to reduce the scope of organized crime and their potential and indirect engagement in the conflict. The results of alternative development are not immediate but they are indeed sustainable.

Alternative development policies are rather new in Colombia, if compared with the situation in other countries. As a consequence, they are permanently adjusted to the new strategic priorities of the government and to the new scenarios that predominate.

The Colombian government has an innovative Programme of voluntary elimination of illicit crops and alternative development, called: “Forest Warden Families Programme”. The main objective is to motivate farmers to keep their land free of illicit crops. The Programme also aims to recover the forest in areas that are ecologically and socially vulnerable. The government and the families involved should sign a contract, which establishes monthly payments of US\$265 per family for a three years period. The Forest Warden Families Programme has two main components: First of all, the environmental component deals with the preservation of the environment. This involves technical support of expert entities, thus, training families on the establishment of productive and sustainable projects. The second component deals with the increase of the social capital, by a permanent training of families in community saving, leadership, and projects managements among others.

The selection criteria for the areas of each project is based on the identification of a number of districts within one or two municipalities that constitute a geographic unit along with the commitment of the inhabitants to keep all farms of his own district free of illicit crops. A break of this commitment from just one family in a given district implies the withdrawal of all families of that district from the Programme.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Colombia works on the close monitoring of this Programme bringing greater cohesion to UNODC’s priorities and strategies on the elimination of illicit crops. Recently, UNODC could inform the Colombian president, Mr. Uribe, that the Programme had achieved a reduction of 82% on coca crops and an increase of 23% on reforestation. Besides, 66% of the direct beneficiaries are women. As a result, farmers across the country have saved 20 thousand million pesos (Aprox. 8 million dollars) to finance alternative development projects. In addition, these families have been able to buy their own land with the salary they receive monthly. 25% of the families bought lands during the PFGB (around 32,000 hectares) resulting of 7,500 new families with their own land. Among the warden families only 0,9% would consider a possibility of returning to illicit crops as an economic subsistence.

Moreover, UNODC has fully supported the Alternative development projects of the Colombian government. After various years of technical assistance in the field of human security in Colombia, UNODC can conclude from that experience that its projects have contributed to the generation of a strong local social and human capital in the areas with a greater presence of illicit cultivation. The process to form social capital has focused on strengthening peasant organizations in the eight most affected departments: Cauca, Nariño, Putumayo, Caquetá, Guaviare, Meta, Bolívar and in Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. As a result, today all the producers’ organizations have marketing agreements for their products

and they participate actively in the planning and development institutions in their departments.

The UNODC projects have achieved: From 1996 to date more than 8,000 peasant families have benefited from alternatives such as double purpose livestock breeding (meat and milk), forestry and traditional crops such as coffee, cacao, plantains, fruits and palm hearts, among others. The products of the alternative development projects in Colombia are known in Colombia as “Peace Products” due to the evident positive effects which they produce in the country.

It is considered that if the creation of rural businesses which produce traditional crops such as coffee, beans, cacao, plantain, fruit, palm hearts, forestry, among others, and at the same time the support of the private sector can be relied upon for the commercialization of these products, we will be achieving more sustainable and successful policies against drugs in Colombia. For the time being, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has managed to sign marketing agreements with nationwide supermarkets such as Carrefour, CAFAM and Éxito-Casino and at the same time count on the support of commercial European organizations like Andines (in France) to support the elimination of illicit cultivations of coca and poppy.

The drug problem is not only a Colombian problem. It required shared responsibility at world level, of the countries with high levels of consumption, of those countries which facilitate trafficking routes, of those who launder the proceeds or produce the necessary base chemicals for the production of cocaine or heroin.

The collaboration provided for the marketing of alternative producers, for the so-called “Peace Products”, will be very valuable as it will allow the reduction of monies received by armed groups in Colombia, and slow down the advance of illicit cultivations into environmental ecosystems that are priceless to humanity.

We estimate that approximately 6,000 hectares of illegal crops have been eradicated and more than 50,000 hectares of legal cultivations have been installed by UNODC projects. The commercialization agreements with the private sector have generated important changes of the socioeconomic and market conditions. In fact, with a permanent “demand” for legal products in the same producing areas and the possibilities to compete against the illegal crops became real and the concept of ‘illicit crop-free economy’ became self-evident and no longer an abstract dream, former illicit crop producers have now abandoned for good any form of illegality and informality. They have become proud shareholders of sustainable and successful peasant companies. Carrefour and UNODC professionals could not ask for a bigger prize.

Yet, despite of the facts mentioned before, most of the alternative development projects have not achieved to consolidate an economic alternative to more than 20% of the population producing illicit crops. It is calculated that about 100.000 families live in Colombia with coca crops; thus, more international support is crucial in order to eliminate narco-traffic in Colombia. In the past decade, United States funds have been of great support (US\$7 million = 42% of UNODC/Colombia total funds compared to 58% of

Europe as a whole) but yet more international contribution is necessary to win the war against drugs (See attachment 1).

The international community and the United States must share the responsibility for reducing the world's biggest supply of cocaine. Cocaine consuming nations need to reduce drugs demand, especially in Europe where abuse is rising.

Thank you very much.

## Attachment 1 INTERNATIONAL DONNORS <sup>(2)</sup>



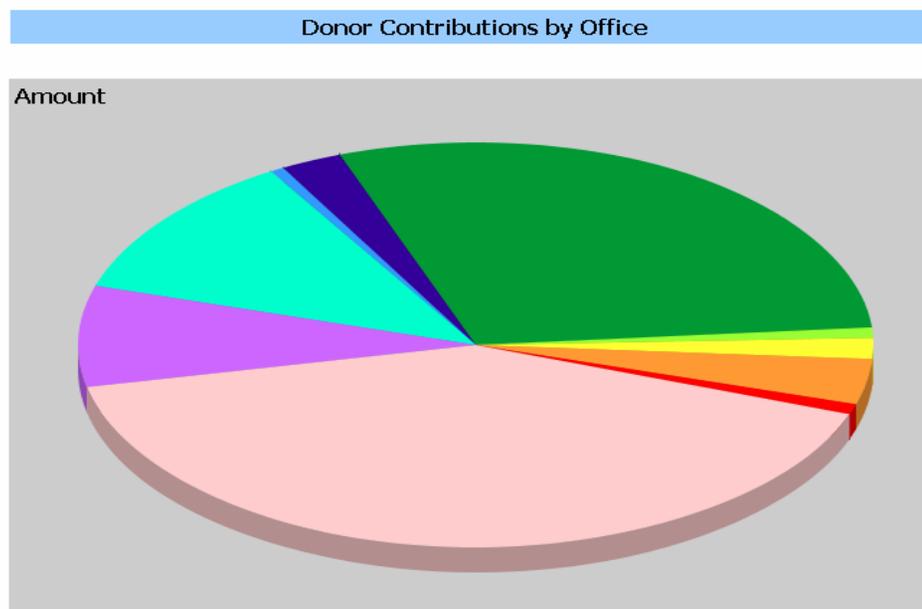
**Drugs and Crime Programmes - Technical Cooperation**  
**Donor Contributions by Office**  
**Region: Latin America and Caribbean**  
**for Ongoing or Operationally Completed Segments as of September 2006**  
All amounts are in US\$ unless indicated otherwise

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Field Office	Total Approved Budget 2006	Total Funds needed	GP Fund	AUT	CAN	DNK	ESP	FRA	GBR	ITA	NLD	SWE	USA	Total Donor Contributions excluding GP Fund
<a href="#">COCOL</a>	20,918,165	4,388,508	-	121,065	602,142	300,000	95,400	151,609	1,392,499	4,964,087	416,010	2,004,183	7,000,180	16,529,657
<b>Percentage of total contributions by donor</b>				<b>0.73%</b>	<b>3.64%</b>	<b>1.81%</b>	<b>0.58%</b>	<b>0.92%</b>	<b>8.42%</b>	<b>30.03%</b>	<b>2.52%</b>	<b>12.12%</b>	<b>42.35%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20,918,165</b>	<b>4,388,508</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>121,065</b>	<b>602,142</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>95,400</b>	<b>151,609</b>	<b>1,392,499</b>	<b>4,964,087</b>	<b>416,010</b>	<b>2,004,183</b>	<b>7,000,180</b>	<b>16,529,657</b>



<sup>2</sup> This information is only referent to international donor's contribution, with out taking into consideration Colombia as a donor. However, Colombia is an important economic donor of UNODC/Colombia.